(c) whether there is any mechanism evolved to monitor and oversee the prices of the commodity so as to ensure that private sector companies manufacturing the commodity do not indulge in malpractices at the cost of the financial terms lenders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) The information asked for is of commercially sensitive nature. It will not be in the interest of the Company to divulge such information.

(c) In a deregulated environment, prices are determined by the free interplay of forces of demand and supply. Government does not intervene in the market to influence prices.

National Steel Policy

1223. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a national steel policy that would aim at cutting costs for steel producers and increase exports;

(b) if so, whether a meeting of primary producers has been called to discuss the issue of price stability and lowering of import duty on steel;

(c) whether Government have Constituted a Committee to address iron ore related issues faced by sponge iron industry;

(d) if so, whether Government would provide relief to Indian Steel sector which is reeling under steel fall in global prices of the metal; and

(e) if so, the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) to (e) Yes, Sir. To look into iron ore related issues pertaining to the sponge iron industry, the Government has constituted a Committee comprising of representatives from the industry associations, Ministry

of Mines,Governments of Orissa and Jharkhand and public sector iron ore mining companies. However, there has been an up-trend in the global steel prices over the last three months.

Steel production

1224. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that steel production in the country have increased manifold during the last six months;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Indian steel makers exported 2.35 million tonnes during April-September, 2003; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons for exerting pressure on steel makers and manufacturers not to increase steel prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) The production of Finished (Carbon) Steel during the period April, 2003 to September, 2003 has been provisionally estimated at 17.041 million tonnes which is 7.35% above the production during the corresponding period of the previous year.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In a deregulated environment, prices are determined by the free interplay of forces of demand and supply. The Government does not intervene in the market to influence prices.

UN Volunteers programme

1225. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians, at present participating in the United Nations Volunteers Programme, the areas of their assignments and the countries to which the volunteers have been assigned;

(b) the normal tenure of these volunteers in a particular country; and